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King William's Town
5601
April 2010

"The family are delighted to announce that on Friday at four thirty in the afternoon," As we listened in church to the announcement, we thought that the arrival of a baby was being spoken about and were surprised to hear the sentence finished with the words"we struck water!" After sinking three bore holes, they had eventually found a source of water. The Eastern Cape has been going through a severe time of drought. This should be our rainy season, yet only a tiny amount of rain has fallen. In a month's time, the rainy season will end and normal patterns of weather would indicate that there will be little more rain until October. The fields and gardens which should be looking green at this time of year are brown. Water rates beyond modest usage have quadrupled. Prayer meetings in some areas take place frequently. Food prices are rising sharply and many farms are at crisis point. There is a hose pipe ban and water is now rationed. Roads are cracking badly as the ground becomes so dry. Please pray for rain. (In fact, there have been a number of showers in the last week or so which have been welcomed with much thankfulness to God.)

It is yet another difficulty that South Africa is having to face on top of an electricity crisis and financial pressures. Power bills are rising sharply. In fact, Eskom (the national power company) requested a 35% increase each year for the next three years and though they are unlikely to get that, the price of power will certainly increase significantly. Inflation is still quite high and the exchange rate is very volatile.

You will have heard about streets paved with gold. Well the streets in King William's Town are paved with papier mache! The municipal workers are on strike, so instead of collecting the rubbish, they have been tearing open the bags and scattering it all over the roads. We also have several burst water mains in the town, which despite our dreadful shortage of water are not being fixed because of the strike. These two situations have combined to turn all the mess into sludge which then dries hard as the sun beats down.

Please pray for our country and the mêlée that it seems to be in at the moment.

We have a new temporary member to our family. A girl in Rachel's class is living with us for a while as she is unable to live at home. She is a lovely girl but one with many problems - not of her own making. I had been in the school talking to a teacher about Bethany, when I saw Rachel hovering at the door. I excused myself to find out what Rachel was wanting. She told me of the girl's situation and asked if she could come and live with us. She has fitted into our family well and we all enjoy having her to stay very much. She has a lovely testimony. She was converted a couple of years ago at a time when things were very difficult at home. Her life has transformed and although there are still major issues, she is such an example of what it means to rejoice in the

Lord at all times. We can learn so much from young people when we stop to listen to them.

Bethany is still struggling with her underactive thyroid. She is finding writing very painful and difficult. At the moment she has a scribe to help her write her end of term exams. There are some signs that the thyroxine is beginning to take effect and we are grateful for that. She was seen by a pain management specialist who recommended that she takes a year out of school. We are not going to rush into making that decision, especially as we are seeing some improvement already. We would appreciate your continued prayers for her. (Since starting this letter, Bethany has had surgery on both hands for Carpal Tunnel Syndrome and will possibly need surgery for Cubital Tunnel Syndrome too – both caused by the underactive thyroid. She is making good progress and is looking forward to being able to take part in the activities such as horse riding and steel band again as well as being able to do her own writing.)

Having just moved Stephen back into main stream schooling we now have to make more decisions for his future. It is now time for us to apply to High Schools for Stephen. There is the possibility of him moving on to Dale College which is in King or going to Port Rex in East London which caters for children with learning difficulties. At Port Rex he will be taught a trade along with academic learning, but it will mean that he either has to stay in a hostel or find transport each day. Dale College will only provide academic learning, but he will be able to stay at home. Please pray for us as we make these decisions.

Some of you have been asking what has happened about the school that I was hoping to open in conjunction with our local church. Our application for Telios Christian School is still progressing – slowly – as we wade our way through a series of administrative procedures, dealing with people who are not sure what category we fit into. We have at last (we think) found the right person and it looks like things are moving forward. Word has got around that we are planning this school and have had many phone calls from people who have children with a variety of needs who are looking for somewhere appropriate for their children to study.

You may remember me talking about a girl called Muhlali. She is the daughter of one of the cleaners at Dumisani. She has learning difficulties and because her school could not cope with her needs, we paid for her to attend another school in King and then a boarding school in East London when she was ready to go on to Secondary school. She wasn't showing much signs of making progress and it was a big financial commitment for us, so in faith that our new school would go ahead, we withdrew her from the school that she was attending. Our plan was that she would study with me at Teleios, and at the same time be trained into a caring role within the school. These plans have obviously had to be put on hold while we wait for the application process to be finalised. In the mean time, she is with me every day. She makes muffins for our bookshop/coffee shop, we do some basic school lessons each day and I have taught

her how to make double thick blankets out of fleece material. The students and staff at Dumisani and others have seen her blankets and she has already sold several with orders for many more. In fact she has had so many orders that she has taught her sister and mother to make the blankets too as well as the daughters of our other cleaner. It is lovely seeing that way that these young people are learning skills which can bring much needed money to their families.

Another exciting development is that I was approached by a local school to become a full time counsellor to staff and pupils at the school. I already get called in on an occasional basis when there has been a particular emergency, but I knew that I did not have the time to do this. As I was pondering what to do for the school, I met one of our former Dumisani students who was aiming to go into Christian counselling. I spoke to the school's principal, she was interviewed and is now working in the school. At her interview she was asked if she would try to convert the students. Quick as a flash she replied, "No, only God can do that!"

We have recently said good bye to Prof Howard Marshall who was with us for a week. He was speaking at our award ceremony as well as a couple of Sunday services and three midweek lectures. A valuable by-product of these thoughtful and stimulating lectures was that we were able to make contact with more pastors and Christians from the area. Many people commented that they were amazed that a man of Howard's calibre was here in King. It is great to see how Dumisani is more and more being seen as a resource for the churches in the area of all denominations and ethnic groupings. The library now has many private users, the Sunday School teacher training is growing along with our new Sunday school teacher's correspondence course. The bookshop is being well used and the general-interest lectures (no exams) are being well attended. We have had several churches asking if we could train their Bible Women as they see the Free Church Bible women getting training. Please give thanks to God for the way he has opened so many opportunities for service and for the many ways we see his hand at work in this land.

We are still considering how to progress as far as buildings for Dumisani go. We can't afford to embark on a major building project without significant financial backing and yet we can't really continue with the buildings that we have at the moment. Please pray that if it is God's will that we build, that funds will come in and that we will know clearly what direction to follow.

Prayer points

- Pray for the rains to come before the dry season arrives.
- Pray that Teleios Christian school will receive its licence soon.
- Pray for the many young people in our town who live in very difficult situations.

- Pray for the work in Dumisani, that it will continue to reach out to many people helping to equip them for God's service in whatever realm of work they are involved in.
- Pray for Bethany as she continues to struggle through the effects of an underactive thyroid.
- Pray for Rachel who is coming up to her final exams and for her future plans.
- Pray for Stephen as he continues to study at Dale and for his future plans as he begins his plans for high school education.
- Pray for finances and clear direction in building a more suitable building for the growing needs of Dumisani.
- Pray for the ongoing political unrest in the country.

All for now. Thanks for your interest and prayers. Much love

Alistair, Jenny, Rachel, Bethany and Stephen Wilson